

*Government Orders*

Our principles are based on a recognition of the value of diversity, that the Canadian nation will not be built on homogeneity, but true respect and celebration of our many cultural communities, of Canada's first nations, on francophone and anglophone linguistic groups.

Therefore, there must be a recognition in our Constitution of collective rights and collective responsibilities. As well, we have individual rights under the charter. We have to look to what makes us collectively a nation. If there is to be equality for all Canadians, we must ensure that the rights of groups and communities are respected. That may require different constitutional arrangements with different groups, whether those groups be aboriginal people or Quebec. Real equality comes from acknowledging diversity within one nation, and through that we will find a common bond.

From these basic principles we can move to really building a constitution. Canadians are looking for real meaningful constitutional renewal. They are looking for a constitution that reflects the reality of Canada, the reality of Canada as it is as we move into the year 2000. Canadians are looking for a constitution that meets the needs of aboriginal people, of women, of minorities, of Quebec, of the north, and of the regions of this country from coast to coast to coast.

This proposed committee will address only some of these issues. It will look at a narrow aspect of the Constitution. Its deliberations can easily be ignored by the government and will be ignored, if we look at the past record of this government. We oppose this motion, not because we do not care about Canada's future but because we do care about Canada's future.

Canadians know where New Democrats stand. We stand for one Canada, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, to the Arctic Ocean. We stand for one Canada that celebrates its diversity, that brings people together in a commitment to creating a caring and a just nation for everyone.

There is little evidence to justify any faith or trust in this government's commitment to building a constitution through an open and democratic process. Let us look at the record.

First, there was the agreement at Meech Lake in 1987: 10 premiers and the Prime Minister drawing out a map for the future of Canada without talking or listening to

the people who would have to use that map, the people who would have to follow its directions.

How was this map presented to Canadians? The Prime Minister said that not a word could be changed, not a comma could be changed. Throughout the debate he polarized Canadians by saying that anyone who expressed concerns about the accord, anyone who raised options to what was in the accord, had to be anti-Quebec. It was a divisive strategy. It was a destructive strategy for this country. If I may say so, it is one of the most destructive things that this Prime Minister and this government have done in this country, and that is why we are now at the point that we are at in 1990.

[*Translation*]

And what about the process that followed these events? A committee on Meech Lake was established, a committee that sat for a month, never left Ottawa and had very few opportunities to listen to what Canadians had to say. The Senate held numerous hearings. The ensuing recommendations were ignored.

When it realized it should listen to Canadians, the government finally appointed the Charest Committee. Our party and many members of this House took the committee seriously. We worked very hard to try and find solutions and reach a compromise.

Although it had little time, the committee tried to listen to what the people had to say.

[*English*]

The Charest committee did find a compromise upon which all three parties of this House agreed. What did the government do with that report? It ignored it. It ignored it like it has ignored all the recommendations coming from public hearings, whether those public hearings be on trade, GST, green plan or the Constitution. This government has public hearings. It hears, but it does not listen to Canadians.

• (1220)

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Ms. McLaughlin:** The Charest committee was ignored. Then, true to form, the Prime Minister called together the premiers for one more back-room, closed door session, and Canadians were forced to live with the consequences.